

**San Antonio, TX**—Congressman **Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23)** announced today announced \$343,000 in funding he has secured for a program aimed at reducing the number of teen car crash fatalities in San Antonio. The money will be used to expand the successful **Teens in the Driver Seat (TDS)** program, America's first peer-to-peer safety program for young drivers. More than 6,000 teens die every year in traffic crashes – the number one cause of death, by far, for this age group.

"6,000 young lives lost each year in our country to teen car crashes is the equivalent to nearly two and a half times the enrollment here at Taft Communications Arts High School," Rodriguez noted in his announcement. "But that's not how these tragedies happen; they happen one or two at a time, which is why this problem isn't getting the attention we believe it deserves. With this funding, the Teens in the Driver Seat program will work to change that."

TDS is designed to address both risk awareness and driving behavior, relying largely on the power of peer-based communication. Surveys of high school students across Texas show that young drivers and their passengers are largely unaware of the risks they face. Those risks include driving at night, distractions such as cell phones and too many teen passengers, speeding, low seat belt use, and alcohol. The surveys also indicate that teens frequently engage in risky driving behaviors.

"Numerous studies – and our own experience – tell us that teenagers listen to each other far more than they listen to adults. What better way then, to make them safer on the roadways, than to have them carry the message to each other?" said Hope Andrade, Chairwoman of the Texas Transportation Commission, who joined Rodriguez for the announcement. "For the past few years, that's what we've been doing at TxDOT through our involvement in the TDS program."

TDS was originally launched on the campus of Communications Arts and adjacent Taft High School in a 2003 pilot study. In that effort, the peer-to-peer communication effort helped raise awareness of certain driving risks by as much as 200 percent. Since that time, the TDS program has spread to nearly 100 schools across Texas.

"We're working to stop the number-one killer of teenagers in America," Rodriguez said. "And I am proud to be able to augment these efforts for Southwest Texas by making the federal

funding available.”

Visit the Teens the Driver's Seat website for more information, [www.t-driver.com](http://www.t-driver.com) .

Congressman Rodriguez meets with the Students from Communications Arts in San Antonio, TX par

